The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

E8.5.1.3
Ministry Agents Handbook
General Placement Conditions

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Introduction

The Uniting Church in Australia affirms:

> *"that it belongs to the people of God on the way to the promised end."*
> (*Basis of Union*, Para 18)

To assist in that journey the Uniting Church:

> *"will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to recognise among its members men and women called of God to preach the Gospel, to lead the people in worship, to care for the flock, to share in government and to serve those in need in the world."*
> (*Basis of Union*, Para 14)

These foundational statements in the *Basis of Union*, support Regulation 2.2 *Definition and Scope of the Specified Ministries* which details the different roles that can be undertaken by a person called to serve God. The various sub-clauses of this regulation provide the governing rules on candidature, training, ordination and selection. Please refer to the Regulations for full details.

In the Queensland Synod, the following ministry agent roles are available:

- Minister of the Word
- deacon
- pastor

This handbook outlines ministry agent general payments and benefits, please refer to your Terms of Placement for conditions related to a specific placement. Further details are available by clicking on links within each topic. The term "ministry agent", unless specifically qualified otherwise, includes Minister of the Word, deacon and pastor engaged in a full-time or part-time placement. This handbook does not apply to lay persons employed in ministry locations designated as appropriate for the exercise of the ministry of pastor.

Placements

The *National Handbook of Procedures for the Placement of Ministers 2006* covers the requirements as per Regulation 2.6 of the Uniting Church in Australia.

In the Queensland Synod, the General Secretary or their delegate is the secretary of the Placements Committee. The Placements Committee is responsible for making arrangements for the movement of ministry agents into placement positions. As part of an approved placement, ministry agents must fulfil their obligations under the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (Qld) and hold a current blue card business or exemption card at all times. The Queensland Synod also requires a completed Consent to discuss information form. Further details regarding blue card requirements can be found in the blue card guidance notes available at C2.1.5.2 Blue Card Requirements of Ministry Agents. Any enquiries concerning the occupancy of a placement, the placement guidelines or other requirements for ministry agents should be directed to the office of the General Secretary.

Stipend

Regulation 2.7 provides the basis for the stipend and conditions which the Synod is authorised to determine. The stipend is set for Queensland Synod ministry agents by the Remuneration and Nominations Committee (RNC) under their charter, which is approved by the Synod Standing Committee.

The church has traditionally approached stipend as a "living allowance" paid to ministry agents to cover their needs as they exercise their ministry, rather than a salary. RNC reviews the stipend and allowances that will apply from 1 July each year taking into consideration external benchmarks outlined in the Ministry Stipend and Allowances Policy (E/8.5) and Procedure (E/8.5.1).

To support the living allowance provisions of the stipend, the National Assembly has determined to utilise the Australian Taxation provisions so that ministry agents may benefit from sacrificing allowances and a proportion of the stipend for use as expense fringe benefits. Forms to participate in the fringe benefits scheme and to claim a reimbursement can be found under the heading "Ministerial Fringe Benefits" on the Ministries, Placements Processes page, on the Queensland Synod Hub. For further information on the fringe benefits scheme, contact the Synod Office Finance team at fringe@ucaqld.com.au.

Payment of stipend

Stipends and allowances are paid on a monthly basis and are administered by the Payroll office of the Synod. The stipend and various allowances are covered in more detail at Ministry Agents Payments Notice.

A ministry agent's monthly net stipend is paid directly to their nominated personal bank account to be available by the 20th of each month.

Congregations or other appointing bodies are required to enter an arrangement with the Synod office to enable direct debit of the stipend amount (along with other associated costs) immediately following the processing of the monthly stipend. Direct debits usually occur between the 18th and 25th of each month.

To ensure smooth operation of the payroll process, each ministerial agent must complete the following forms before their stipend payments can commence.

- Personal Details Form
- Superannuation (super) standard choice form
- Tax file number declaration

These forms must be accompanied by a fully completed Congregation/agency details (CAD) form. The CAD form can be located on the Hub

Stipend margins

The Queensland Synod generally accepts that in some situations the payment of a loading (margin) is appropriate. Such a loading is an expression of the responsibility that those in certain ministries carry on behalf of the wider church and of the trust that the church has placed in those people. Further details can be found in the Ministry Stipend and Allowances Policy (E/8.5) and Procedure (E/8.5.1).

Deductions from stipend

In addition to the normal deduction options, other deductions such as additional superannuation contributions may be arranged.

Deductions must be authorised in writing and forwarded to the Payroll office by the **5th day of the month** to be actioned. For further support, please contact a member of the People and Culture team.

Lay staff comparison

The following information provides a ministry agent with a comparison between the stipend (including allowances) and an employee remuneration, taking into account a ministry agent participating in fringe benefits. The comparison provides the same net payment (after tax):

100% Stipend and Allowances – Comparison calculations 2026

Full Time Placement (maximum participation in fringe benefits scheme)	
Stipend 1.0 FTE	$72,168.00
Housing allowance 1.0 FTE	$22,476.00
Travel Allowance 1.0 FTE	$13,764.00
CEM 1.0 FTE	$912.00
The Ministry Agent participates in fringe benefits with 50% of their stipend and 100% of their allowances.	
Total Gross	$109,320.00
Non-reportable fringe benefits: 50% of Stipend & 100% of allowances	$73,236.00
Taxable Gross	$36,084.00
Tax (Annual PAYG)	$3,324.00
Net Pay	$32,760.00
Net Pay + Fringe Benefits	**$105,996.00**

Full Time Placement (no participation in fringe benefits scheme)	
Stipend 1.0 FTE	$72,168.00
Housing allowance 1.0 FTE	$22,476.00
Travel Allowance 1.0 FTE	$13,764.00
CEM 1.0 FTE	$912.00
The Ministry Agent does not participate in fringe benefits.	
Total Gross	$109,320.00
Non-reportable Fringe benefits	$ -
Taxable Gross	$109,320.00
Tax (Annual PAYG)	$25,536.00
Net Pay	$83,784.00
Net Pay + Fringe Benefits	**$83,784.00**

Lay Staff Equivalent to Full Time Placement with maximum participation in fringe benefits scheme	
Base Salary (excluding Super)	$142,764.00
Total Gross	$142,764.00
Taxable Gross	$142,764.00
Tax (Annual PAYG)	$36,768.00
Net Pay	**$105,996.00**

Issuing of payment summaries

With the introduction of one-touch payroll, tax information is sent to the ATO at the end of each pay period and will be available through your MyGov account.

Special payments

Where a congregation provides additional payment to a ministry agent for services such as baptism, wedding or funeral, the church treasurer must complete a Special Payments Form to ensure that the payment is included in the ministry agents payment summary and taxed appropriately. Further details can be found in the Ministry Stipend and Allowances Policy.

Housing

Presbytery/Synod placements

In accordance with By-law Q5.4.1 it is the responsibility of the congregation or other appointing body to provide a suitable residence for each ministry agent placed within its bounds. The residence within the bounds of the church is called a manse. The Ministry Agent Housing Policy provides further information:

- when a ministry agent is in at least a 50 per cent placement and a manse is available
- when a housing allowance will be paid towards the cost of accommodation in lieu of providing a manse
- when a ministry agent couple live in one manse or in their own home.

The current allowance is detailed in the Ministry Agents Payments Notice.

Travel

Ministry agents in placement are eligible to receive a fixed annual allowance which provides for the basic costs of owning a vehicle (registration, insurance, depreciation, etc.) and the operating costs (fuel, etc.) for the first 10,000 kilometres of travel. Higher allowances apply for distances between 10,000 and 20,000 kilometres. For distances in excess of 20,000 kilometres a set rate per kilometre applies.

Current rates are available at Ministry Agents Payments Notice.

By mutual agreement, a congregation may opt to supply a vehicle to the ministry agent. This arrangement will replace the payment of the travelling allowance.

Superannuation

Choice of funds

The NGS Fund is the default superannuation fund for the Queensland Synod. Ministry agents may choose any fund by using the standard Commonwealth Government Superannuation (super) standard choice form. Contributions will be at the prescribed rate. For further information, please contact the Synod Payroll team.

Beneficiary Fund

The Uniting Church in Australia established the Beneficiary Fund to provide members with superannuation benefits and to help them save for their retirement. The Beneficiary Fund is not a complying MySuper product. The Defined Benefit Membership of the Beneficiary Fund is closed to new members from 1 October 2020. The Beneficiary Fund is administered by Mercer and more information is available at mercerfinancialservices.com.

Other placement allowances

Remoteness allowance

A remoteness allowance is payable to ministry agents when their placement is in an area where living expenses are deemed to be above the average cost of living for the state. The current allowances are found in in Appendix A. Where an allowance is applicable, the prescribed allowance must be included in the placement documents. Remoteness allowance is broken into four areas being Inner Regional, Outer Regional Australia, Remote Australia and Very Remote Australia.

Remote holiday allowance A Remote Holiday Allowance applies to ministry agents serving in the congregational locations listed in Appendix A. The Remote Holiday Allowance is paid in recognition of the additional costs incurred to take annual leave due to the travel distance to a major coastal city. The Remote Holiday Allowance is a single payment which may be applied for at the time of holiday by a Minister to cover him/her and their family.

Ministry Agents who are eligible for the Remote Holiday Allowance are also eligible for an extra one week of annual leave to cover travel.

Leave

Annual leave

Annual leave shall be four weeks per year and is inclusive of four Sundays, as outlined in the Ministry Agent Leave Policy (E/8.6). For part-time ministry agents, annual leave is paid on the same proportion as the placement. For annual leave, the following requirements apply:

- Annual leave should be taken during the year in which it falls due and must be endorsed by the church council.
- Once endorsed, all annual leave applications must be recorded in the payroll self-service portal for record-keeping purposes.
- Annual leave records are to be kept by the congregation or the appointing body.
- Annual leave may be held over to the following year, but no more than eight weeks shall be accumulated at any time without written approval.
- Annual leave accrued within the placement must be taken within the placement unless otherwise negotiated to be transferred to the next placement.
- All stipend benefits and allowances apply during periods of annual leave.
- Annual leave for ministry agents does not attract a leave loading.
- The Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee should be advised of leave arrangements.
- No lump sum payment in lieu of annual leave not taken will be made at the conclusion of a placement or at the time of retirement.

Long service leave

The purpose of long service leave is to refresh a ministry agent after extended service. Regulation 2.7.1(c) provides for the application of leave provisions by the Synod or other determining body. For the Queensland Synod, By-law Q5.3 details the long service leave provisions. Further details can be found in the Ministry Agent Leave Policy (E/8.6) and Procedure (E/8.6.1).

Sick leave

All ministry agents in full time or part time placement or supply who become ill and are unable to carry out their normal duties, are entitled to sick leave. Sick leave provisioning is divided into two categories: Short Term Sick Leave and Long Term Sick Leave. 7

Short term sick leave
There is provisioning for a ministry agent in full-time placement to receive four weeks paid sick leave per annum. Pro-rata entitlement would apply in a part-time placement and in supply. Absences of more than three consecutive days require either a medical certificate or a statutory declaration. This leave is managed and recorded by the appointing body. Unused short term sick leave cannot carry over into the next placement year and cannot be carried into a new placement or supply role and cannot be paid out. In extenuating circumstances, the placement with Presbytery approval, can choose to provide Ministry agents with additional paid short term sick leave.

Long term sick leave
Where the illness is extreme and/or protracted, the ministry agent should advise the church council chairperson or appointing body, and the Presbytery PRC (or equivalent) so that appropriate pastoral care may be provided for the minister, and suitable arrangements made for the placement. Any condition or illness which prevents a ministry agent from carrying out their ministerial responsibilities should be communicated to the congregation/ placement in an appropriate and sensitive manner. This shall be decided by the Chairperson or Convener of the appointing body in conversation with the ministry agent.

Ministry agents in placement may be considered for long term paid sick leave on a case-by-case basis as approved by the General Secretary. This is only available after all short term sick leave has been utilised and the ministry agent has been in a placement for at least 12 months. 8.3. Long term sick leave is not to be used when the absence would be subject to a workcover claim.

For some ministry agents, superannuation fund provisions may be available for temporary and permanent disability payments including the provision for temporary retirement in the event of prolonged illness. This avenue should be utilised where it is anticipated that the period of incapacity will be prolonged. Where there is repeated need for sick leave causing a significant impact on the placement, there should be a discussion between the ministry agent, appointing body and Presbytery PRC as to the ongoing viability of the ministry. For more information, refer to E8.6.2 Ministry Agent Long Term Sick Leave procedure.

Public holidays
It is the responsibility of the ministry agent and the appointing body to agree on how public holidays should be addressed.

Continuing Education for Ministry (CEM) and study leave

- All ministry agents are required to undertake programs for continuing education. Further information can be found in the Continuing Education for Ministry Policy (POL-MAP-01) and Learning Agreement Form TOO-Map-01. A continuing education learning agreement is maintained by the ministry agent in Educate, the online learning management system of the Synod. For further information about Educate, contact learning@ucaqld.com.au.
- Continuing education (study) leave of up to 14 days per year, as outlined in the Ministry Agent Leave Policy (E/8.6), may be approved by the Presbytery in consultation with the church council or appointing body.
- A Travel Assistance Fund assists eligible ministry agents in meeting travel costs (for example flights, accommodation, meals). Travel for continuing education must be more than three hours from the ministry agent's residence to the place of required study. Refer to the Learning Agreement Form TOO-Map-01 for more information and the application form.

Workers' compensation
The Synod maintains a single policy with WorkCover Queensland for its workers' compensation insurance. For ministry agents who are injured while performing their ministerial duties, an application is to be made to WorkCover Queensland using the details provided at Workers' Compensation for the Synod.

Compassionate leave or bereavement leave
This is a matter of negotiation between the ministry agent and the church council or agency.

Maternity, adoption and paternity leave
The maternity, adoption and paternity leave policy outlines the eligibility for each leave type. Maternity leave applies to female ministry agents and allows for 40 weeks unpaid leave and 12 weeks paid leave. Adoption leave applies to male and female ministry agents and provides for 40 weeks unpaid leave and 12 weeks paid leave.

Paternity leave applies to male ministry agents and provides for 52 weeks unpaid leave.

For full details including notification requirements, please refer to the Ministry Agent Leave Policy (E/8.6) and Procedure (E/8.6.1).

Other benefits education

Alcorn Fellowship Grant
The Alcorn Fellowship Trust is administered by an independent committee to provide grants to assist those in specified ministries of the Uniting Church in Australia and other committed lay persons to engage in approved short or long-term study or research programs in Australia or overseas whereby such applicants will be better equipped to fulfil their particular vocations in the mission of the Christian church. Applications for assistance from this Grant must be made in writing to the General Secretary. For further information or to apply please click on the below links:

- Alcorn Trust Flyer
- Alcorn Trust Application form

Ministers' Financial Assistance Fund
The Ministers' Financial Assistance Fund assists ministry agents who are deemed to be in severe financial hardship, after all other avenues have been exhausted. Grants from the fund are determined by the General Secretary of the Synod. Ministry agents seeking a grant from the fund should contact their presbytery office or the General Secretary.

Millard-Smith Bequest Fund
The fund exists to assist ministry agents without placement, particularly for the purpose of rehabilitation or refocus in order that the ministry agent might either return to ministry within the church or make the transition to entry into secular employment.

Applications for this assistance should be submitted by the relevant presbytery to the General Secretary.

Relocation/removal arrangements

For ministry agents in an approved placement where the congregation or agency is contributing to the CPMP the Synod normally accepts responsibility for arranging relocation and paying removal costs.

Further details can be found in the Relocation and Removals Policy. Contact the Synod office via Synod.Removals@ucaqld.com.au

Wesley Hospital support

Ministry Agents in need of financial assistance should first contact Manager: Mission and Pastoral Care' on admission, who will advocate with the Director of Corporate Services on the Ministry Agents behalf.

Guidelines for part-time placements

Agreeing to the hours/days of service

Both congregations/agencies and ministry agents may seek a part-time placement. Such arrangements may be negotiated and mutually agreed between the parties. All part-time agreements must be documented to indicate the ministry commitments required across the part-time week of the placement.

Part-time placements may include supply arrangements.

Reception of Ministers Process

Refer to Reception of Ministers Application form on the Hub which includes the requirement for a National Polick check and Good Standing for Ministers. This also applies for any new Ordained/Pastor from another denomination being placed in a placement before they complete the Reception of Ministers Process.

Stipend, allowances and other contributions

- The stipend, allowances and other contributions are determined by the percentage of full-time employment worked by the ministry agent.
- The annual stipend is divided by 52 weeks and part-time ministry placements will be the appropriate portion.
- Four weeks annual leave is provided to all ministry agents in full-time or part-time ministry. The payment of annual leave for part-time placements is at the same proportion of the full stipend for the part-time ministry agent, as outlined in the Ministry Agent Leave Policy (E/8.6).
- If the supply ministry only covers the leading of worship, then payment according to casual teaching rates set by the Synod may be appropriate.
- In terms of payment of the housing allowance for part-time ministry agents working less than 0.5FTE, the housing allowance will be worked on the same percentage of service to be performed. Where a part-time ministry agent working less that 0.5FTE will be living in a manse, the proportion of contribution by the ministry agent will need to be negotiated between the congregation and the ministry agent. Where there is minimal or no other income available to the household, some other adjustment may be made by mutual agreement.

Details of the agreement

Agreement on a supply, intentional interim or part-time ministry should be confirmed by an exchange of letters. The congregation should outline the tasks, terms and conditions of the supply ministry. (A written agreement is helpful to both parties. Mutually agreed variations to the original agreements should be confirmed in writing.)

Preparation for the arrival of a supply/part-time ministry agent

Personal welcomes and common courtesies should take place when the ministry agent arrives.
A list covering key congregation personnel, times of key events and information such as supermarket locations and garbage removal times could be helpful.

Casual rate for services

Students in training at Trinity College Queensland (other than those undertaking a field placement) and retired ministers should be paid on a casual rate for occasional services as nominated in the stipend information. Such information is found at Ministry Agents Payments Notice

Questions

Any questions not covered in this handbook in relation to payments should be directed to the presbytery leader or the Payroll Team.

Appendix A

Remoteness allowances and remote holiday allowances applicable for those regions identified in the below tables.

Remoteness allowances:

Location	Monthly allowance
Inner Regional Australia	$75.00
Outer Regional Australia	$130.00
Remote Australia	$220.00
Very Remote Australia	$810.00

Region classification by location:

Location	Remoteness Allowance
Atherton	Outer Regional Australia
Aurukun	Very Remote Australia
Ayr	Outer Regional Australia
Barcaldine	Very Remote Australia
Biloela	Outer Regional Australia
Bluewater	Outer Regional Australia
Bowen	Outer Regional Australia
Boyne Island	Inner Regional Australia
Cairns	Outer Regional Australia
Cannonvale	Outer Regional Australia
Charleville	Very Remote Australia
Charters Towers	Outer Regional Australia
Chinchilla	Outer Regional Australia
Clermont	Remote Australia
Cloncurry	Remote Australia
Cunnamulla	Very Remote Australia
Dalby	Inner Regional Australia
Edmonton	Outer Regional Australia
Emerald	Outer Regional Australia
Freshwater (Cairns)	Outer Regional Australia

Location	Remoteness Allowance
Gladstone	Inner Regional Australia
Goondiwindi	Outer Regional Australia
Hughenden	Very Remote Australia
Ingham	Outer Regional Australia
Innisfail	Outer Regional Australia
Jandowae	Outer Regional Australia
Kingaroy	Inner Regional Australia
Longreach	Very Remote Australia
Mackay	Inner Regional Australia
Mapoon	Very Remote Australia
Mareeba	Outer Regional Australia
Moranbah	Outer Regional Australia
Mornington Island	Very Remote Australia
Mossman	Outer Regional Australia
Mount Isa	Remote Australia
Moura	Outer Regional Australia
Mundubbera	Outer Regional Australia
Murgon	Inner Regional Australia
Nanango	Inner Regional Australia

Location	Remoteness Allowance
Napranum	Very Remote Australia
Proserpine	Outer Regional Australia
Rockhampton	Outer Regional Australia
Roma	Outer Regional Australia
Sarina	Outer Regional Australia
Smithfield (Cairns)	Outer Regional Australia
St George	Remote Australia
Stanthorpe	Outer Regional Australia
Tara	Outer Regional Australia
Thursday Island (Torres)	Very Remote Australia
Townsville	Outer Regional Australia
Tully	Outer Regional Australia
Walkerston	Outer Regional Australia
Wandoan	Remote Australia
Weipa	Very Remote Australia
Winton	Very Remote Australia
Wondai	Outer Regional Australia
Yeppoon	Inner Regional Australia

Remote holiday allowances:

Western parishes at $540 per annum
Cunnamulla
Charleville
Barcaldine
Longreach
Cloncurry
Winton
Mt Isa
Hughenden
Gulf parishes at $914 per annum
Thursday Island
Napranum
Mapoon
Aurukun
Mornington Island
Weipa

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The Uniting Church in Australia
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Revisions

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1.4	05/07/2024	Placements Committee	21/11/2024	Ministry and Mission	Associate General Secretary
1.5	March 2025	Placements Committee	21/03/2025	Ministry and Mission	Associate General Secretary
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